

Military's Voice Being Heard on Lithuania, a Soviet Aide Says

By CRAIG R. WHITNEY
Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, April 14 — President Mikhail S. Gorbachev is under increasing pressure from the Soviet military for an army crackdown in Lithuania, an official of the Communist Party's Central Committee says.

The official says the military has worked out plans much like those under which the Soviet Army occupied Prague in 1968. They include a strategy of seizing the Lithuanian Parliament building, replacing the leadership that has declared independence, imposing martial law and installing other leaders who would rescind the republic's March 11 proclamation.

Word of the military pressure comes as Col. Gen. Vladimir Denisov, Deputy Chief of the Soviet General Staff, warned on Friday in the Soviet newspaper *Trud* that "the carrying out of the policy of the present Lithuanian leaders for secession is pregnant with danger for the security not only of the Baltic republics and the U.S.S.R., but for all of Europe."

'Painful Consequences'

Secession by the Lithuanians would create a breach in Soviet defenses and lines of communication to the West, the general said. "If they don't listen to the voice of reason," he wrote, "events could have painful consequences for everybody."

The tough line is probably aimed at Western ears. But it also coincides with assessments by American intelligence officials that the rapid deterioration in the Soviet security position in Eastern Europe and the poor domestic economy have strengthened the hand of the Soviet military establishment and narrowed support for Mr. Gorbachev's policies.

Pressure from the military may also explain the threat on Friday, signed by Mr. Gorbachev and Prime Minister Nikolai I. Ryzhkov, to stop supplying

Lithuania with essential raw materials if it does not repeal some of the measures adopted since March 11.

This move apparently represented a change in Mr. Gorbachev's position since last Tuesday. Douglas Hurd, the British Foreign Secretary, who was visiting at the time, said the Soviet President told him, "A decision had been taken not to interrupt the flow of necessary materials to Lithuania."

Threat to Gorbachev's Plans

Soviet officials who support Mr. Gorbachev's course of economic and political change now tell their Western friends that the Soviet leader's plans for transforming the economy could be threatened by the Lithuanian crisis and by the continuing collapse of Soviet strategic positions in Eastern Europe.

They are aware that harsh measures against Lithuania now would end support and encouragement for Mr. Gorbachev's policies in the West. But as Mr. Gorbachev himself complained to a delegation of American senators here last week, all the West has done so far is lecture him on avoiding force.

One Communist Party official said that if President Bush really wanted to help, he should call up the Lithuanian President, Vytautas Landsbergis, and urge him to make a compromise, like retracting or suspending the declaration of independence.

A Western diplomat said he would be surprised if Mr. Gorbachev himself or one of his political allies like Aleksandr N. Yakovlev or Foreign Minister Eduard A. Shevardnadze had not already made such a suggestion to Mr. Bush in advance of the Soviet-American summit talks in Washington, which begin late next month.

But it would appear to have little chance of success. Mr. Bush is under pressure from Congress to recognize Lithuanian independence formally.



The New York Times/April 15, 1990

Moscow is said to have plans on seizing Lithuania's Parliament.

The White House has explained that such a move is unnecessary because the United States, like Britain, has never formally recognized the Soviet annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in 1940.

Some Soviet officials wonder what the United States or anybody else in the West would actually be able to do for the Lithuanians if there were a military crackdown, besides offering them moral support.

They also complain that the United States has not shown its appreciation for Mr. Gorbachev's rapid and continuing shifts on German unification.

A few weeks ago, the Soviet leader was insisting that a united Germany be neutral and could not belong to NATO. Last week, Mr. Shevardnadze suggested that one way was belonging to both NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

"We didn't expect you to accept this idea whole," a Central Committee figure said after the White House rejected the idea on Wednesday. "But why don't you make some constructive counter-proposal instead of rejecting ours?"

A midweek change in Gorbachev's position?

Valentin M. Falin, Mr. Gorbachev's chief adviser on German affairs, said in an interview on Monday that the dual-alliance idea was intended to provide a transition to a new all-European security structure to replace both NATO and the Warsaw Pact in five to seven years.

"Why not agree in the talks on German unification that this is the goal?" another adviser suggested. "That would be the kind of signal we need."

But some Western diplomats here think that the right posture to take on Lithuania and Germany is simply to keep waiting to see how many more positions Mr. Gorbachev is forced to cede before holding out a safety net for him. Others believe that the longer the Lithuanian impasse continues, the more Mr. Gorbachev will be boxed in by his critics in the Communist Party and the military.

If Mr. Gorbachev is indeed coming under pressure from the Soviet military to do something on Lithuania, the situation will be aggravated by the fact that both Lithuania and Estonia are urging young men to refuse to answer their draft calls next month.

Communist Party officials are emphasizing the importance of support for Mr. Gorbachev from the military, rather than from the Communist Party apparatus, because they say party support does not mean as much as it once did. Mr. Gorbachev has shifted his power base to the newly institutionalized and strengthened presidency.

Earlier in the week, the Central Com-

mittee apparatus, with the open support of Yegor K. Ligachev, the leading conservative in the Communist Party Politburo, called for driving out radicals who want to move faster toward a free-market economy. But the call was dismissed as mainly irrelevant by one of Mr. Gorbachev's aides.

"If that's the kind of party they want, most people will side with the people they throw out," an aide said of the conservatives.

But he was less sanguine about the economy. Mr. Gorbachev's great political gift, he said, was for compromise — which is why he keeps extricating himself from political crises — but not for decisive, radical action.

"He waited too long to start the economic reform; that's clear now," this man said. "Now, most of the rest of the leadership is just sitting around indifferently waiting for it to fail. When you get right down to it, Gorbachev just has Yakovlev and Shevardnadze actively on his side."